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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: TIP: TURKEY STILL CONCERNED WITH "SEX SLAVES"
VIDEO SHOWINGS

REF: A. USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 721

[1](#)B. ANKARA 5121

[1](#)C. STATE 162361

[1](#)D. STATE 73395

[1](#)E. ANKARA 2586

ANKARA 00005743 001.2 OF 002

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: To follow-up on the GOT's September 4 demarche (ref b) expressing dismay at USG-sponsored events showing the PBS Frontline film "Sex Slaves," we met with MFA DDG for Expatriate Turks, Migration, Asylum and Property Issues Akif Ayhan and Department Head Melih Ulueren on October 3. We outlined points shared first bilaterally in Washington on September 15 on USG efforts to place the video into context in terms of Turkey's anti-trafficking efforts (ref c). We emphasized UNVIE's successful showing that included the Turkish Ambassador's participation (ref a). Ayhan expressed continued concern that the video depicted Turkey in an overly negative light that could harm both the GOT's ability to fight trafficking in persons (TIP) and Turkey's image abroad. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Ayhan thanked us for previous USG assistance to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) anti-trafficking program in Turkey and effective ongoing bilateral and multilateral cooperation to fight TIP. Ayhan said he understood the value in such efforts to raise TIP awareness and encourage increased donor and government resources to fight the problem.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Ayhan warned, however, that continued widespread screening of the video to large audiences could have a negative effect on Turkey's ability to fight trafficking. The video shows Turkish police and customs officials in a very negative and unbalanced light, akin to the distorted depiction of Turkish prisons in the 1978 movie "Midnight Express," according to Ayhan. Ayhan also noted that dramatic flourishes in the film such as Middle Eastern theme music and dark lighting did not reflect the real Turkey and damaged its image.

[1](#)4. (SBU) The MFA's concern, Ulueren said, was three-fold. One, if Turkish security officials viewed the video and

learned of the USG role in its dissemination (ref d), he would be concerned about their inclination to continue vigorously fighting the TIP problem in Turkey. Security officials can be reactionary and will respond more effectively to encouragement and praise rather than unbalanced attacks or inaccuracies. As an example, Ayhan pointed to the controversy earlier this year that harmed cooperation between Turkish National Police (TNP) and IOM when the TNP believed that IOM grossly exaggerated the numbers of trafficking victims (ref e). Two, if the Turkish public found out about the USG role, the backlash would harm GOT efforts to fight trafficking and increase anti-Americanism in Turkey. Three, widespread showings of the video regionally could harm the tourism industry, particularly with Russia and Ukraine.

¶5. (SBU) Ayhan and Ulueren requested that the film be shown to expert audiences who would benefit from its message rather than more general audiences for whom the depiction of Turkey might harm overall Turkish interests, particularly its tourism industry. Both asked that the message sent by Washington to posts about Turkey's anti-trafficking efforts be emphasized. For example, Ayhan asked whether a showing of the video in Constanta, Romania at an American Corner (NFI) contained these contextual points. He also asked whether the decision to share the video with all posts was well-coordinated inside the Department with respect to potential political ramifications.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: As the lead entity in charge of Turkey's government-wide anti-trafficking task force, the MFA is at the forefront of aggressive action against trafficking in Turkey. The MFA's concerns about possible reactions from security forces and the public are not knee-jerk; they are real. Post appreciates the Department's decision to provide posts with contextual information on Turkey's fight against TIP to address Turkish concerns (ref c).

ANKARA 00005743 002.2 OF 002

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